

The Tender Heart of the Warrior

by [Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche](#) | March 10, 2018

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The ground of fearlessness, says Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, is renouncing hard-heartedness and allowing ourselves to be tender, sad, and fully present.

The ground of fearlessness, which is the basis for overcoming doubt and wrong belief, is the development of renunciation. Renunciation here means overcoming that very hard and tough, aggressive mentality which wards off any gentleness that might come into our hearts. Fear does not allow fundamental tenderness to enter into us. When tenderness tinged by sadness touches our heart, we know that we are in contact with reality. We feel it. That contact is genuine, fresh, and quite raw. That sensitivity is the basic experience of warriorship, and it is the key to developing fearless renunciation.

Sometimes people find that being tender and raw is threatening and seemingly exhausting. Openness seems demanding and energy-consuming, so they prefer to cover up their tender heart. Vulnerability can sometimes make you nervous. It is uncomfortable to feel so real, so you want to numb yourself. You look for some kind of anesthetic, anything that will provide you with entertainment. Then you can forget the discomfort of reality. People don't want to live with their basic rawness for even fifteen minutes. When people say they are bored, often they mean that they don't want to experience the sense of emptiness, which is also an expression of openness and vulnerability. So they pick up the newspaper or read anything else that's lying around the room—even reading what it says on a cereal box to keep themselves entertained. The search for entertainment to babysit your boredom soon becomes legitimized as laziness. Such laziness actually involves a lot of exertion. You have to constantly crank things up to occupy yourself with, overcoming your boredom by indulging in laziness.

For the warrior, fearlessness is the opposite of that approach. Fearlessness is a question of learning how to be. Be there all along: that is the message. That is quite challenging in what we call the setting-sun world, the world of neurotic comfort where we use everything to fill up the space. On the other hand, if we are in touch with basic goodness, we are always relating to the world directly, choicelessly, whether the energy of the situation demands a destructive or a constructive response. The idea of renunciation is to relate with whatever arises with a sense of sadness and tenderness. We reject the aggressive, hard-core street-fighter mentality. The neurotic upheavals created by overcoming conflicting emotions, or the *kleshas*, arise from ignorance, or *avidya*. This is fundamental ignorance that underlies all ego-oriented activity. Ignorance is very harsh and willing to stick with its own version of things. Therefore, it feels very righteous. Overcoming that is the essence of renunciation: we have no hard edges.

Warriorship is so tender, without skin, without tissue, naked and raw. It is soft and gentle. You have renounced putting on a new suit of armor. You have renounced growing a thick, hard skin. You are willing to expose naked flesh, bone, and marrow to the world.

Adapted from Smile at Fear: Awakening the True Heart of Bravery, by Chogyam Trungpa. Copyright 2009 by Diana J, Mukpo. Excerpted with permission from Shambhala Publications.